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HENRY VON EICHENFELS.

HOW
HENRY VON EICHENFELS
CAME TO THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

BY
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Translated from the German by
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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE PRESS.
COLLEGEVILLE, IND.
1898.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. AN ANGELIC TASK	5
II. RESULT OF A TRIFLING DISOBEDIENCE . . .	9
III. THE MOTHER'S GRIEF	14
IV. IN THE ROBBERS' DEN	20
V. THE ESCAPE FROM THE DEN	27
VI. THE HERMITAGE	33
VII. THE SUN AND THE FLOWERS	37
VIII. PLANTS AND TREES	42
IX. THE FOUNTAIN AND THE RAIN	46
X. THE GREATEST QUESTION ANSWERED . . .	50
XI. A JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAINS	57
XII. AN UNEXPECTED VISIT	65
XIII. THE FATHER'S JOY	69
XIV. THE AFFLICTED MOTHER CONSOLED . . .	74
XV. REWARD AND PUNISHMENT	81

CHAPTER I.

AN ANGELIC TASK.

IN the first half of the eighteenth century there lived, in an ancient and very stately castle that was located near an immense forest, a German nobleman and his virtuous wife, Count Frederick and Countess Adelaide von Eichenfels. They had only one child, named Henry, a tender and most handsome boy whom they loved with all the fervor of parental affection. Before the child was able to pronounce the word *father*, the noble count had to leave home to serve his king in a war. His pious consort remained in the castle; and she felt it to be her greatest consolation and her only joy, during her husband's absence and while she lived in lonely retirement, that she could have her darling little Henry with her to bear her company.

It was her purpose to devote herself entirely to the education of her boy; and with all the ardor of her loving heart did she long for the hour when, bearing the lovely child in her

arms, she could go out to meet her husband on his return from the war.

On a certain evening the countess was sitting in one of the rooms of the castle, with the infant resting in her lap. Margaret, the governess, was standing beside her, holding up some newly-gathered flowers before the boy's face. While the girl was thus playing with the child in a friendly way, the mother watched him stretching out his little hands to grasp the flowers; and she felt exceedingly happy in beholding the infant's joyful smiles. Suddenly a servant who had accompanied his master into the field, entered the room and brought the countess the sad message that her husband had been seriously wounded in a battle, and that before his death, which might be very near at hand, he wished once more to see his wife. The countess turned deathly pale; and she was seized with such a trembling that she could scarcely hold the boy in her arms. When the messenger saw how profound the anguish of the noble countess was, he tried to lead her into the belief that her husband would recover from his wound; yet he was obliged to inform her that she would have to travel day and night, if she wished to see him still among the

living. The countess resolved to set out on the journey immediately. With hot tears did she moisten her child's face. "My dear little Henry," she exclaimed, "alas! you cannot even guess why your mother is weeping so piteously. Poor child, you will lose your father without being old enough to know him! Oh, how it pains me that I cannot take you along with me on this journey to the military camp!"

Then turning to the governess, she said, "O Margaret, to you I deliver the most precious jewel that I must leave behind when I go. Take good care of the child. Do not let the boy remain alone for a single moment, not even while he is asleep. Wait on him with as much attention as if I myself were present. Whenever the weather is fair, especially in the morning, carry him out into the garden where the air is cool and fresh. Sing a song for him sometimes, and speak to him. Often show him a beautiful flower or some other lovely object. Let him never handle what might prove dangerous for him, anything that he might cut himself with or that he might swallow. Above all you shall never dare to hurt him, or let him feel your anger and resentment because of his childish awkwardness. To take care of chil-

dren is a task which the angels are most fond of. The janitress whom I place in charge of the house during my absence will report to me whether or not you have carried out all my directions. Promise me that you will never be heedless of these admonitions, so that I may be without anxiety at least in this regard. I shall count the hours that must elapse before I can return. If you can then place the boy in my arms strong and in good health—be assured, I shall know how to reward you. I shall also bring you something beautiful with which, I am sure, you will be highly pleased.”

Margaret made the best of promises. The countess kissed the boy and blessed him; and having uttered a silent prayer, with her tearful eyes turned heavenward, she placed the child in the girl's arms. Amid the loud weeping and lamenting of all her servants, the noble lady entered the carriage; and despite the fact that night was approaching and the rain was pouring down in torrents, she drove out of the yard before the castle.

CHAPTER II.

RESULT OF A TRIFLING DISOBEDIENCE.

MARGARET was a poor orphan girl from the country. She was of a devout, childlike disposition; she was always cheerful and light-hearted, and possessed a rosy comeliness of person. It was on this account that her mistress had chosen her to be little Henry's governess. The good, pious girl carefully observed all that the countess had commanded her. Not a single hour passed by in which she did not recall to mind the directions she had received from the countess. She loved the noble woman as being her greatest benefactress, and the boy himself was the object of her most cordial affection. She honored him, even then, as the future count and her master that was to be.

One day Margaret sat beside the cradle of the sleeping infant engaged in doing some knitting. The cradle was provided with a roof that overhung the boy's head; and on the inside of this roof the girl had fastened some roses in order that the child, on awakening,

might be delighted with seeing something beautiful. A piece of white gauze was laid over the cradle to protect the little sleeper against the flies. Sweeter and more beautiful than even the roses did the cheeks of the sleeping boy appear through the thin gauze.

While the governess was thus engaged, some itinerant musicians made their appearance before the gates of the castle and began to play their instruments. The people of the castle all came together; and having admitted the strangers into one of the lower rooms, they made ready, their mistress not being at home, to spend the afternoon in hearing the music and amusing themselves with dancing. Margaret loved nothing better than music; nevertheless she remained sitting undisturbed beside the cradle. After a few minutes George, the garden-boy, came hurriedly into the room. "O Maggie," he cried, "do come down to us into the lower room! You can't imagine what a gay time we're having. I have never, in all my life, heard such splendid music. One of the musicians has a tambourine, and he pounds on it as if he intended to knock it into pieces. A little boy is striking the triangle, and that doesn't sound badly either; and a large boy

with plump cheeks is blowing a horn which makes one's ears tingle—he plays it louder than the other does the triangle. Come down as quickly as you can.”

Margaret replied that she was not permitted to leave the child even for one moment. “Oh, don't be so silly,” remarked the heedless boy. “You don't want to play the saint all alone, do you? The boy is sleeping soundly, and you can't help him to sleep better. Come on, and don't be so awkward. In a quarter of an hour you will be back again. You cannot refuse to go a round with me in the dance.” Margaret went with the lad, though her conscience upbraided her sharply for doing so. She felt very little pleasure while she was below; on the contrary, her heart was seized with a great fear. She wanted to leave the room, but her companions were determined not to let her go. At last she tore herself away by force and hurried back to the cradle of the child she loved so much and which was entrusted to her care.

But—what a feeling of terror took possession of her! The cradle was empty; there was nothing to be seen of the boy! She recovered from her fright and tried to console herself with the thought that one of her com-

panions, for a joke, had placed the child in some other bed in order thereby to frighten her. But the very thought that the countess might find it out caused her to tremble. She ran from one room to another—nowhere a trace of the missing boy! A deadly fear seized her. She hurried down into the room again and called out to the dancers, “The young count has been taken out of his cradle. Which of you has tried to frighten me so cruelly by removing the child?”

There was none that knew anything about it. None of them had been in the room during her absence. They all quit dancing and the musicians left the castle without waiting for the usual spending-money. As many as were in the room hurried up the stairs, all being most profoundly alarmed. The castle was searched from top to bottom, and soon it was observed that besides the child quite a number of valuable articles were missing. What conclusion could they come to but that the boy had been stolen?

The hilarity to which all had given themselves so freely a short while before was now turned into weeping and lamenting. “My God!” said the janitress, sobbing loudly,

“oh! pity our good mistress! How will she feel when she hears of this? It will surely cause her death!” Margaret, the governess, was on the point of yielding to despair. She would have run away, and she might even have cast herself into the river, if her companions had not detained her. “O merciful God!” she cried out repeatedly and full of the most bitter grief, “who could have thought that so small an act of disobedience would be followed by such dreadful consequences?”

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER'S GRIEF.

THE domestics were all assembled in the upper room of the castle. They were highly alarmed, utterly confused; they were weeping aloud, and deploring the calamity that had befallen them. And Margaret, poor girl! was sitting beside the empty cradle. The roses with which she had adorned the little wicker bed were scattered about her on the floor. She was almost crazed with grief; her hair was unloosed and disordered; her dark eyes showed the expression of an intense agony. All of a sudden and hastily the door was thrown open—and the countess entered the room.

The count's wound seemed to be less dangerous than it was at first thought to be. As soon as he was out of danger, he urged his wife to hasten back to their home; and indeed, the love and solicitude of her own heart impelled her still more to return to her beloved child. She had just alighted from her carriage; and

hurrying up the stairs to the room, she hoped to clasp her darling boy to her heart.

The servants were terribly frightened on thus unexpectedly beholding the countess in their midst. Margaret uttered a loud cry. "God, have mercy on *me* and *her*!" she shrieked. With a sense of deep alarm the countess beheld the pale faces of her attendants, their eyes reddened from weeping, Margaret's look of despair, and the empty cradle standing in the room. A thousand forebodings, a thousand terrifying thoughts flashed like lightning through her soul. No one dared to answer the questions she asked. She began to fear that her child had been killed. At length, partly through the information she received and partly through her own surmising, she learned what had taken place during her short absence. She felt as though heaven and earth were falling upon her—she fainted; and she would certainly have sunken on the floor, if the servants had not supported her.

"O God! O God!" she exclaimed piteously, when after some time she had regained her consciousness, "what a terrible grief hast Thou afflicted me with! Alas, my child, my dearest child! Oh, my husband, my beloved husband!

This misfortune will wound you more deeply than did the sword of the enemy!—O my darling little Henry, where may you now be? Into whose hands have you fallen? Ah! if you were to grow up among robbers, misled by them, without instruction, without being taught to acquire virtue and good manners,—what a horrible fate! I tremble even to think of it. I would much rather weep at your little grave. Yes, then I could be sure that you are a beautiful angel before the throne of God, and I could console myself with the thought that one day I shall see you and be united with you again. But now I cannot enjoy even this, the only and sweetest consolation I could have for losing you! Alas! what can, what will become of you, growing up in the company of such wicked people?

“O God!” she exclaimed again, falling on her knees, and amid a flood of tears raising her folded hands toward heaven, “O Thou good and merciful God, Thou art our only consolation in all our afflictions! My child is torn from me, but it cannot be taken out of the reach of Thy all-powerful arm. I do not know the dark forest, the hidden robbers’ den, in which my boy is now secreted; but Thy eye

beholds him, wherever he may be. It is impossible for me, his mother, to render him any more services of loving care, but Thou, and Thou alone, canst preserve him. Thou hearest the cries of the young ravens:—oh! do Thou also hear the cry of this child which certainly is weeping and ardently longing to be with its mother!—But to my husband and myself give Thou the grace to bear this trial with resignation. It is true, we have lost the boy through the negligence and impiety of others; but it is Thou who hast permitted the evil to be done. Thou hast designed it so; to Thee I offer the child with a confiding heart, though it be with tears and deep sorrow. I know for certain that this affliction, under the direction of Thy merciful providence, will result to my welfare.” It was in this manner that the sorrowing mother consoled herself.

Margaret, the governess, was quite inconsolate. She cast herself on her knees before the countess and asked her pardon. “I assure you, noble lady,” said she, wringing her hands, “I would most gladly sacrifice my blood to the last drop if I could thereby free the child out of the hands of the robbers. I pray you, let me be executed; I will be glad to die.” The

good countess forgave her. "The sincerity of your sorrow, Margaret, deserves pardon," said she, "and I promise that no harm shall come to you on account of this misfortune. But now you realize how well I meant it and how prudent my directions were. You have learned now from experience what dreadful results can come from disobedience, levity, and a hankering after worldly amusements. The pleasures we all might have enjoyed are now lost, just like these roses that are lying about us on the floor withered and torn."

The countess, having recovered from her first fright, and learning that the boy had been robbed only a couple of hours before, sent a considerable number of men out to scour the country, in hopes that some trace of him might be found. One messenger after another returned to the castle. Margaret ran out to meet them as often as one came in sight. Even from the distance she noticed, from the expression on the man's face, that he bore no good tidings; and that caused her tears to flow afresh each time. The last messenger returned home without having found even the slightest clew, and it seemed as though the poor governess would weep herself blind.

Gradually, however, she became more composed. Yet she was always very pale, and she walked about as though she were haunted by her own shadow. Everybody pitied the unhappy girl. All of a sudden she disappeared, and no one could tell where she had gone to.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE ROBBERS' DEN.

AN old, ugly-looking gipsy woman, with coal-black hair, and yellowish-brown face, had stolen the boy. This woman made it her business to cheat superstitious people by means of telling their fortune, and even to rob them whenever an opportunity offered. Under this pretext she had already once before visited the castle, on which occasion she carefully spied out all the conditions of the locality. She had a secret understanding with the oldest of the three musicians; and while this fellow drew the inmates of the castle into the lower room by the uproarious playing of the instruments, the gipsy slipped through a small gate in the wall of the garden which the careless garden-boy had left standing open. Crossing the garden, she stealthily ascended a winding stair which was but seldom made use of; she slunk into the boy's room and took the sleeping infant out of the cradle; and having, moreover, gathered such valuables as she

found ready at hand, she fled with the boy across the garden into the adjacent forest.

There the woman hid herself in a thicket, waiting for the shadow of night to come; then during the several hours of darkness that followed, she proceeded on her way, carrying the child with her. She took care to travel only on roads that she knew were scarcely known and seldom frequented. During the daytime she concealed herself in some dense jungle, or in a field grown with corn. She had provided herself with an abundance of provisions. Thus she journeyed on foot for many miles until she reached the mountains. In one of these mountains there was a deep, subterraneous cavern, a most horrible place. It had once formed part of a mine, which was then deserted and had mostly caved in. The entrance to this cavern was so well covered with debris and dense brush-wood that a person unacquainted with the location could scarcely discover it. The gipsy woman, for quite a distance, made her way across broken rocks and through a thicket of thorny shrubs and blackberry bushes, until at length she reached an iron door the key of which she carried with her. This door she opened; and after proceeding for nearly an

hour, through a long and gloomy passage, she at last arrived in the cavern.

This cavern was the dwelling-place of a band of robbers. Here it was they concealed themselves from the searching eyes of the law; here they also concealed, locked up in large, heavy chests, the valuable goods they had robbed—a lot of rich clothing and costly furniture, gold and silver, pearls and precious stones. When the gipsy woman with the child entered, the robbers, fierce-looking fellows, with coarse faces and ragged beards, were all sitting together, passing their time in drinking, smoking, and playing cards. They rejoiced exceedingly when they learned that the child was the young Count von Eichenfels, and they highly complimented the old gipsy on the adroitness with which she had executed the robbery. They had long wished to get a child of such noble parentage into their power. “Granny,” said the leader of the band, “you have done splendidly. Now we are perfectly secure. If ever any of us gets caught and they want to punish him, then he needs only to threaten that the rest of our gang, according to our agreement, will torture this little chap to death. That will force them to show him mercy, and they

may even set him free." The captain then gave the old gipsy, who served the robbers as cook and housekeeper, the strictest orders to take the best possible care of the boy, so that he might be sure not to die in their hands.

In this horrible cave the boy grew up until he came to the use of reason, and here also he learned to speak. The remembrance of his early childhood was completely effaced. He lost all idea of the sun, the moon, and the whole beautiful world created by God. Not a single ray of sunlight ever penetrated into this dark and frightful abode. A lamp, burning day and night, hung from the soot-covered ceiling of the cave, dimly illumining the rough walls with its reddish light. There was no lack of provisions. The robbers brought in meat, bread, vegetables, and especially such articles of food as could easily be preserved; and also an abundant supply of wine. A large barrel in one corner of the cave, which they filled from time to time with fresh water, served this underground household in place of a well. But since they were obliged to fetch the water from a great distance, the old woman repeatedly cautioned the boy always to close the faucet well. A litter of rushes, which however was

laid over with costly blankets, furnished the robbers with a bed for their night's rest.

The gipsy took the utmost care not to let the boy suffer the least want. She gave him plenty to eat, but she never instructed him in anything that is good. The boy learned neither to read nor to write, nor did he ever hear these wicked men say even a single word about God. There was only one among the robbers who was fond of conversing with little Henry. He was a young man named William, the son of righteous parents, who had been led to adopt this dreadful manner of life through his love for gambling. This young man, whenever he returned to the cave, always brought some plaything with him and gave it to the boy that he might use it to pass the time. He also gave him various kinds of figures, cut out of wood and beautifully painted, as for instance the figures of a herd of sheep, with a shepherd and a shepherd-dog, a garden of different kinds of trees hung with yellow and red fruit, a small mirror, and other playthings of the kind suitable for children. Once he bought a little flute, and taught the boy to play a song with it; and on another occasion he brought him a bouquet of painted flowers, and then taught him how to

cut such flowers himself out of paper, to put them together and to paint them in various colors. In this manner did little Henry spend many an hour. Among all his toys there was nothing the boy was fonder of than a miniature picture of his mother which the old gipsy had stolen from the castle. It was a picture most beautifully painted, framed in gold and crystal, and set all around with costly diamonds. The old woman let the boy have it only now and then, and never for a long time, and only whenever she was in a specially good humor.

William frequently gazed on the beautiful picture—he could not help secretly brushing the tears out of his eyes every time he did so, for the picture reminded him vividly of his own mother. “Poor child!” he would say to himself, “it was cruel, indeed, to tear you away from the heart of such a good mother. Oh, how very differently you would be treated at home than you are treated here in this frightful place! And your mother—how she must be mourning for you! If it were possible, I would most gladly take you back to her. But how can I? I am myself kept here like a prisoner. Hundreds of times would I have run away, if my pretended friends were not so sus-

picious of me and would not watch me so carefully."

The young man often conversed with little Henry on many different subjects and he told him many things which caused the boy great pleasure and which also tended to awaken and develop his youthful intellect; but he never dared to tell him a word about God and eternity, for that the other robbers would not tolerate. They shunned everything that was calculated to arouse their sleeping consciences.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE FROM THE DEN.

WHEN the boy had grown older, he became very anxious to know where the men went to whenever they left the cave. He always begged them to take him along. But they only refused, checking his inquisitiveness with harsh and abrupt answers, and telling him to wait till the next time. Once the robbers had gone out again on one of their expeditions. The old gipsy woman, being now unable to make any journeys on foot, always had to remain back in the cave. She was very lonely company for the sprightly boy. She was extremely morose; and for hours she would sit behind a green lamp-screen, her eyes being bleared, where she would mend some pieces of old linen clothing, or count money, without ever saying a word to the boy. At other times she would sleep and snore for hours.

That day, while the robbers were gone, and the old woman again had one of her sleeping spells, the boy took courage to light a wax

candle and to enter the dark passage through which he had so often seen the robbers leaving the cavern. He walked on farther and farther until at last he reached the iron door. He tried to open it but could not, for it was securely closed by a heavy iron lock. Sadly the boy turned back. But the passage through which he had come was connected with a number of smaller side-passages, in which one could walk about for hours below the earth. The boy entered the first of these side-passages that he came to when he was walking back; and after he had walked on for a considerable distance, and his burnt-down candle was about to extinguish,—just then he beheld, some distance ahead of him, something that looked like a burning light. Full of joyful curiosity he hastened on toward this object. As he drew nearer the thing became larger until it appeared to him like a tall, fiery column standing upright. The courageous boy walked on until at last he came to a clift in the rock through which the light of the early dawn was shining in. The clift was more than large enough for him to creep through—and with one joyous bound little Henry sprung out into the open air.

What was his surprise, when, after his long sojourn in the dark, subterraneous cavern, he for the first time stood under God's lovely, blue firmament, in a locality surrounded by most beautifully wooded mountains—where is there a human tongue able to describe it? It was a bright summer morning. The sun was about to ascend in the east, and the morning sky glowed as though it were ablaze, while on the forests and mountains there hung a veil of reddish mist. The earth all about him was covered with grass and flowers; he heard for the first time the singing of the birds. Below in the valley he beheld a lake in whose clear, tranquil surface the dawning sky and the verdant mountain tops were reflected.

The boy appeared as though he had been struck by lightning. He was completely enraptured; he felt as though he had been awakened from a long and death-like sleep, and he staggered as one who is yet half asleep. All that he could do was to gaze at the wonders; for a long time he could not think sufficiently to express his amazement. At length he exclaimed: "Where do I find myself? How wide, how immensely wide this place is! Oh, how beautiful, how grand everything is!"

And then he stood gazing in speechless wonderment at a tall oak, or a cliff grown over with green pine-trees, or the lake shining bright as a mirror, or a brush covered with blooming wild roses.

The next moment he beheld the sun arising above a pine-covered hill amid a thin and broken covering of golden clouds. The boy viewed the spectacle with fascinated eyes; he imagined it was a fire whose flame was shooting up, and he really believed the clouds were burning. Staringly did he gaze in that direction, until the sun, veiled with a light mist as with a transparent gauze, had ascended majestically above the hills, golden, round, and resplendent. "What can that be?" exclaimed little Henry. "What a wonderful light!" And he continued to gaze, with wondering eyes and arms outstretched, until, blinded by the increasing splendor, he was forced to turn away.

Henry next walked about for a short while; but he scarcely dared to step on the grass, fearing lest he should trample on the beautiful flowers with which the ground was everywhere bedecked. Suddenly he espied a very young lamb which was lying under a flowering rose-bush. "Why, a lamb, here is a lamb!" he ex-

claimed joyfully. He ran up and took a hold of it. The lamb began to stir; it arose and commenced to bleat. The boy recoiled in great alarm. "What can this be?" he cried. "Why, it is alive! It can walk and it has a voice! My lambs are all dumb and lifeless, and they cannot move from one place to another. What a wonder! I should like to know who gave life to this lamb." He wanted to begin a conversation with the little animal; he asked the lamb all sorts of questions—and he was not a little vexed when he found that it always answered him with the same inarticulate cry.

Just then a young shepherd came along, a most handsome youth with red cheeks and yellow hair. He had missed the lamb and was come to hunt for it. He had observed the boy for some time, and he knew not what to make of him. At first sight of the youth little Henry was greatly frightened; but the young man greeted him with some friendly words, and so he took courage. "Oh, how beautiful you are!" said he to the youth. "Pray, tell me," he continued, pointing to the sky and the earth with his arms widely extended, "does this great wide cavern belong to you? Will you not allow me to stay here with you and the lamb?"

The youth could not understand what the boy meant; at first he thought the little fellow must be crazy. He asked him where he had come from. When the boy told him that he had crept out of the earth, when he spoke about old granny and the wild men with the rough beards—then the shepherd began to experience some fear; yes, he was profoundly terrified. Nevertheless he had pity on the poor child. Placing Henry on one of his arms, and carrying the lamb in the other, he hurried away as fast as he could run, just as if the robbers were after him in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HERMITAGE.

IN this same mountain district there lived an old, very venerable hermit whom the people generally knew and spoke of as Father Menrad. He was over eighty years of age and was loved and esteemed by the inhabitants of the district on account of his extraordinary wisdom and sterling piety. To this hermit the young shepherd concluded to bring the boy whom he had found. The hermitage was only a short distance away, being situated on the side of a hill next to the lake in the valley. It could well be likened to the garden of Eden. The hermit's peaceful hut, shaded by the leaves of an ancient grapevine, supported a roof that was grown over by a layer of evergreen moss. It stood within a group of shady fruit trees and was surrounded by a garden of loveliest flowers and wholesome herbs. Back of the hut there arose a vineyard, and on one side of it a narrow cornfield lay stretched out along the hill. And wherever else there was a vacant spot, the same

was occupied by a tree bearing the choicest fruit; or at least it contained a bush of some kind yielding the most luscious berries. On the top of a high cliff that overhung the lake stood a chapel with its small tower pointing skyward. A flight of steps, cut into the rock, led up to the entrance of the chapel.

When the young man opened the latticed gate which led into the garden, the venerable old recluse was sitting on a bench under an apple-tree, from which place a magnificent view could be had of the lake as it sparkled in the sunlight. He was reading devoutly from a large book that was lying before him on the table. The hair that grew sparsely on the aged head, as also the long and heavy beard, were white as snow; but the cheeks still bore the red of health and vigor like those of youth.

No sooner did the hermit notice his two visitors than he arose and greeted them with an expression of the most cordial friendliness. He listened attentively to the account the shepherd gave him; after which, full of the tenderest pity, he took the boy in his arms and asked him to tell him his name. He readily surmised that the child had been stolen by the robbers from some family of noble rank. "Let the boy re-

main with me," said he to the young shepherd, "and in the meantime do not speak about this affair to any one. I trust it will be possible to find the boy's parents; and until I succeed in finding them, the boy will be perfectly safe in my hermitage. The robbers are afraid of my hut as of fire. Gold and silver they cannot discover here—they are aware of that; and for good advice and wholesome instruction, which oftentimes are of much greater value than gold and silver, they have no taste." Then he said to the boy, "Welcome, my dear Henry, most heartily welcome! I will be a father to you and you shall have the best possible care until I can restore you to your own father and mother. From this moment on you will not call me by any other name than that of father."

The hermit then placed some milk and bread before his guests and asked them to refresh themselves. When the young shepherd had finished his repast, he took up his staff, intending to return to his flock. But little Henry at first would not permit him to leave. He began to cry and took hold of his garment. It was only after the young man had promised that he would come again, and after he had given him the lamb for a present, that the boy declared

himself satisfied. Henry was overjoyed in being allowed to keep the lamb, for he considered the little animal to be an object of immense value.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUN AND THE FLOWERS.

THE shepherd being gone, the hermit placed the boy beside himself on the bench for the purpose of entering into a conversation with him. "Dear Henry," he began, "don't you remember anything at all about your father and mother?"

"O yes," replied Henry, "I have a beautiful mother—here in my pocket. Just look!" And he took out the little portrait of his mother which he had put in his pocket before leaving the robbers' cave. The boy had never seen his mother's portrait in the light of the sun. Imagine his astonishment when he now beheld the lustre and beauty of the picture. The radiance of the sparkling diamonds almost dazzled him.

"How bright everything appears hereabout!" said he. "Do tell me," he continued, pointing at the sun, "who has lighted that beautiful, golden lamp up yonder, which makes everything round about us look so bright? I can-

not even look at it, the light is so strong. The lamp in our cave, compared with that one, gave a dim, most wretched light.—And how comes it that the lamp yonder is moving up always higher? When I first saw it, it was just rising from behind the trees, and soon it stood so high that I am sure I could not have reached it even from the top of the highest tree. What keeps it hanging so free in the air and moving along so easily? There is no string tied to it that I can see. Where is this lamp going? And who is it that climbs up there to fill it afresh with oil?"

Father Menrad told him that the large, beautiful light he had asked about was called the sun, that it was thousands of times older than little Henry himself, and that it always moved along and continued to burn that way without ever needing a single drop of oil.

"I can't comprehend that," said Henry. Then his attention was drawn to another object, and he exclaimed: "What a wonderful lot of lovely flowers you have here!" The boy left the bench and ran over to the little beds which all had the appearance of being so many baskets filled with flowers. "Oh, how beautifully they are painted—red, yellow, and blue!

And the petals, so numerous that they cannot be counted—how precious and delicate they are, and all so nicely cut one just like the other! What are they made of, I wonder? This is no paper; yes, even silk is not as fine as the material these flowers are made of. Pray tell me: Did you make them? If you did, then I am sure it must have taken you a very long time to finish them. You must have worked weeks and months to cut out all these flowers. In a number of them I notice some very thin, delicate fibres. To make such fibres one must have a pair of very fine scissors and good, sharp eyes. I have made some flowers myself, but such beautiful ones as these I could never make.”

Menrad declared that no human being could make such a flower. They had all grown up by themselves out of the earth. But Henry would not believe that. “It is impossible,” he said. “I would much rather believe that you really did make them.” The hermit showed him the capsule of a poppy. It was filled with seed; and he shook out some of the tiny, round grains on the boy’s hand, telling him that in each of these little grains there lay hidden a number of such large purple flowers. If the

seed were put in the earth, then the flowers would grow up out of it. In like manner had all the other flowers sprung up out of the earth from such small seeds. The boy looked up at the old man, wondering if he really meant what he had said. Then he exclaimed: "Such a large, beautiful flower to grow up out of such a very small seed! Why, then a seed like this must have been constructed with a great deal more skill than the costliest golden watch!" "That is just exactly the truth," remarked Father Menrad. "But tell me: Who made this wonderful little seed?" the boy asked again. "Why, I should think it would be easier to make all these flowers than to make even one such little grain like this!"

Henry gazed on the flowers again. He went from one flower-bed to the other, and he thought he could never grow tired looking at them. But he soon felt that the light of the sun was becoming very warm. "What an amount of heat that lamp throws out!" he observed. "It is so far away, and yet it makes one feel quite warm. It is a most wonderful lamp!" Menrad led the boy back to the apple-tree where the bench and the table stood overshadowed by the dense foliage. "How cool and pleasant it is

here !” exclaimed Henry, looking up at the tree above him. “This tree is like a green umbrella, which protects one not only against the light when it becomes too strong, but also against the excessive heat. How large it is, and how many thousands of leaves there are growing on it ! The trunk, I suppose, is made of wood. I can scarcely believe any more that you have made this countless number of leaves and flowers. To make them would be too difficult a job.”

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANTS AND TREES.

HAVING thus conversed with Henry for a while, the hermit entered his hut to prepare the noon meal. First he brought out some milk and bread and also some butter and honey and a small basket full of the loveliest apples for the boy ; for himself he fetched some roots and herbs, a large, yellow melon, and some red wine in a glass bottle. Henry ate and drank with great relish. After a while he asked the hermit: "Where did you get all these good things? Do you also sometimes go out like the men in the cave to rob from other people?"

While they were eating, Father Menrad explained to the boy how wonderfully all these things had grown. "Behold," he remarked, taking up an apple to peel it and cut it into pieces for Henry, "all the apples in this basket came from the tree under which we are sitting. Many basketfuls of such beautiful apples grow from time to time out of the thin

twigs of this tree.” “Is that really so?” asked Henry, looking at Menrad with an expression of serious doubt on his face. Father Menrad took the boy on his arm, and having pulled down one of the branches, he showed him the young green apples. “You see now,” he said, “how the apples are growing out of the twigs. They will become larger and larger, until they are as large and as beautifully yellow and red as these are here in the basket. But the whole large tree itself,” he continued, while at the same time he cut the apple in two, “grew up out of a small seed like this one fastened to the blade of my knife. I remember the time very well when this tree was nothing more than such a seed. In one little seed like this there lies hidden a whole large tree; yes, it contains a countless number of such trees. And even more than that:—from one such tiny seed so many apples might be raised that the world could not hold them, and that a man, even if he were to live a thousand years, could not finish counting them.”

“And this bread also comes from seeds very much like the seed of this apple,” and Father Menrad showed the boy a few grains of wheat that he brought with him out of the hut.

“With these grains it is the same as with the apple-seed. From one such grain we might get many thousand loaves of bread like this one lying before us on the table.” The hermit explained to him in detail how it was done to raise such bread; and while he was thus instructing the boy, he pointed to a field of splendid wheat which, a short time before that, he said, was nothing but a plot of bare earth. Henry ran over to the field pointed out to him, and to his great delight he found that every ear he examined already contained a number of such small grains.

“And the same is true,” thus Father Menrad concluded his instruction, “with regard to all the green plants that you can see about you far and near. All these plants—the grass here at our feet, those blossoming rosebushes, the numberless ears of wheat in yonder field, and the vines that cover this hut and the hill behind it, the mighty oak and pine-trees over there on that mountain as well as the thin moss that grows here on the trunk of this apple-tree—all these plants, large and small, have grown up and drawn their blossoms and fruit, or at least might have been raised so, out of one such little seed. All that you see here

on the table—the milk and butter which were drawn out of the grass; the honey which was taken out of the flowers, the nutritious bread and the strengthening wine; the herbs, and roots, and fruits here before us—this water-cress, this radish, this large, beautiful melon; as also the twigs from which this basket is woven, the wood from which this plate and cup are made, yes, even the table and bench—all these things we owe to such small grains or seeds. At one time this place was a barren wilderness:—all that I had to do to change it into its present appearance was to plant such seeds in the earth, and behold! there grew up—here, this apple-tree, and there, the ears of wheat by the thousands, and everything else that is necessary or useful for life and to make my abode in this place as delightful as it can be.”

Henry could not but consider all this most extraordinary. A short time before he had gazed on all these various objects with the greatest wonder, and now he listened to the hermit's narrative with a sense of profoundest amazement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOUNTAIN AND THE RAIN.

EVENING came and the sun was about to descend in the west. Soon the flower-beds lay in the shadow of declining day. Some of the flowers, Father Menrad's special favorites, had begun slightly to wither in the hot sunshine. Though he expected there would soon be a fall of rain, yet he thought it advisable to give at least his favorite flowers a sprinkling with water. He therefore took his sprinkling can, and leading the boy by the hand, went to a fountain which flowed copiously from out of a large, moss-covered rock.

Henry clapped his hands in utter amazement. "What a quantity of water," he cried, "is running out of this rock! Every moment I expect it to cease flowing, and yet it continues to come in always the same abundance. Who is it that has poured this quantity of water in at the top, and where can you get water enough to keep up the supply?—You

ought to close the hole, and use the water more sparingly, otherwise the supply will fail." Menrad told him that the water had flowed in the same abundance probably ever since the sun began to shine, that its quantity never diminished, and that it needed no replenishing or pouring in from above. The lake below in the valley, he declared, which Henry had taken for an immensely large mirror, was nothing more than a collection of such water. All this the boy considered another great wonder.

The hermit returned with the can full of water and immediately set to work sprinkling his flowers. "Why, what are you doing?" exclaimed Henry. "You are spoiling your flowers. The water will surely make the color come off." Menrad smiled and explained to the boy that the flowers and plants, the wheat-stalks and vines, the brushes and trees, which also had a certain kind of life, needed the water as much as men needed it for drinking. "But," asked Henry, "who can carry enough water for all these plants and trees? Who will climb up yonder mountain to sprinkle the trees that are growing there on the top?" Menrad replied, "All that is well provided for. How it is done you will soon observe,—

perhaps sooner than we imagine!" he added, glancing at the clouds in the distance.

After a while there really came a cloud moving over the mountain; soon it began to rain, first lightly, and then very heavily. That was another event that little Henry considered very extraordinary. "That is an excellent arrangement," he remarked, "for it saves you much hard labor. The water descends so beautifully, in thousands and thousands of drops, as though it came out of a sprinkling can.—But who is it that causes this cloud, as you call the wonderful thing, to move along over the mountain? How is it that the cloud hangs so freely in the air, and why don't it fall down upon us?" "I will explain that to you presently," replied Father Menrad. The boy watched the cloud for a time longer until it was dispersed and the sky again wore its bright azure.

Little Henry found so many objects to gaze at and admire, he was so filled with joy and amazement, that the day passed for him very quickly. Hundreds of objects that other people would pass by without scarcely noticing were to him such extraordinary wonders that he had any number of questions to ask, which

questions the good hermit very lovingly answered—a little golden-green bug which he saw resting on the leaf of a rose; a striped snail which was crawling up the trunk of the apple tree after the warm rain; a hedge-sparrow that sat on the limb of a tree, warbling its raptured evening song, and then flying gayly from one tree to another; the hermit's goats returning from their mountain pasture, etc.

Evening came and the sun was about to disappear beyond the distant shore of the lake. "I do declare," exclaimed the boy, greatly alarmed, "the sun-lamp is sinking down in the water! The light will surely be extinguished, and then all our joy will be gone. If we light a lamp of our own—what good will that do us, this place being so large and immensely wide?"

Father Menrad told him not to be disturbed. "Have no fear, my little friend," he observed. "We shall soon go to sleep, and for that we need no light. Before we awake in the morning, the sun will rise again from behind the mountains. It is thus the sun continues to move around us without ever standing still a single moment, giving light and warmth to us and all other beings round about us."

CHAPTER X.

THE GREATEST QUESTION ANSWERED.

ON hearing these wonders about the sun, Henry repeated his former questions which the prudent old man had purposely left unanswered; for he wished first to awaken the boy's curiosity so as to prepare him the better for the instruction that he intended to give. "But who is it," the boy asked again, "that causes the sun always to move in so wonderful a manner? Who built this large, fine vault above us, and who gave it that lovely blue color? By whom was the water confined in that rock, so copiously that it never ceases to flow? Who is it that directs the clouds, letting them pass over us in the air so freely, and causing them to moisten every living and growing thing with numberless drops of sparkling water? Who taught the birds to play such beautiful songs without the use of a flute? Who is it that has inclosed the flowers and trees in such small grains, making them spring

up wheresoever we want to have them, covering the ground far and wide with a glorious carpet of grass and flowers, and presenting us with such an abundance of precious gifts? Pray, tell me: Who is it that has made this excellent arrangement?"

"And so you really believe," said Father Menrad, "that there is some one who has made this wonderful arrangement?"

"O yes," replied Henry, "I am quite sure of it. A person would be most foolish even to doubt it. Why, the men with whom I lived had to work a long time when our cave became too small and they wanted to enlarge it only a little. Once the roof threatened to fall down, and it caused them a great deal of trouble to prop it up. But here I do not see even a single pillar holding up the roof of this immense cavern! The lamp in our cave did not light itself; and if we didn't want to sit in the dark, we had to take great care to fill the lamp with oil at the proper time. And the water vessel had to be filled again and again, otherwise we surely would have suffered from thirst. How difficult it is to cut out a single flower, and how sharp one's eyesight must be to do the work well—that also I know from my own ex-

perience. That all the various objects we see round about us here were not made by human hands—why, who couldn't understand that? Now this is just what I would like to know: *Who is it that has made all these things?* ”

The moment had come—the boy's mind being so deeply impressed with the idea of the world's grandeur, beauty, and wonderful construction, his soul being enraptured on beholding the manifold blessings which everywhere lay spread out before him, his heart being filled with an ardent longing to know who the great benefactor is from whom all these blessings came—yes, the moment had come when the venerable old hermit should begin to speak to the boy about God, about the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. In words that betokened the most profound respect, in a tone of voice trembling with emotion, and his eyes filled with tears, the hermit told Henry that he was right—that there is One who had made all these things, that this almighty, all-wise, all-bountiful Being, who had created all things and by whom men also were created, is called—God, our dear Father in heaven.

How deeply the boy had been moved when for the first time he witnessed the glorious rising

of the sun, so beautifully illuminating with its golden light all the things about him! But the emotion that filled his soul at this moment was much deeper. The thought of God rose in his mind like a sun shining forth from within and warming his soul. The world round about appeared to him in a kindly, beautiful light, as being the storehouse of countless blessings coming from the loving Father above.

“Yes, my dear child,” continued Menrad, observing the boy’s emotion, “it is God who has made all the things you see here about you. He made yon blue vault which we call the firmament. He it is who kindled the sun and who still directs its course. Its light not only discloses to us His wondrous works and accompanies us in our daily occupation; but the sun also sends forth its warm rays to ripen the fruit cooking them, if we may say so, as we cook the food at the fire before eating it. He lets rich fountains of water come forth out of the earth; He lets it descend in drops from the clouds, to quench our thirst and to refresh all the plants you see growing. He it is who has spread out before us this many-hued carpet of grass and flowers. He gave to the flowers their color and fragrance. He causes the hard soil to yield

bread for our nourishment, and the hills and mountains to produce the delicious wine. He loads the branches of the trees with fruit of every kind; He bids the green valleys to flow, as it were, with streams of milk, the cliffs and hollow trees to drip with honey—and all for our use. He made the tree that cools us with its shade and warms us with its wood. He teaches the birds to sing and with their songs to delight us. This lamb here at your feet He has clothed with soft wool, from which the clothes we both wear are made. He it is, the good God, who gives us all that we need for shelter during the day and for our repose during the night. He has made all things so beautiful in order that we may be delighted with His works, that we may love Him and one day come to dwell with Him in a land infinitely more beautiful than the region here about us, where we shall have much greater joy than we possess at present. Though we cannot see God now, He yet sees us wherever we may be. He hears every word that we speak; He knows even our thoughts. We can converse with Him whenever we like. He it is also who directs our destinies. He freed you from the robbers' cave and had you carried here to me on the shep-

herd's arm. God is our greatest benefactor, our best friend, our kindest Father."

Henry listened to the hermit with the utmost attention. Not even for one instant did his eyes turn away from the venerable face, so charmed was he by the words spoken to him. While they were conversing, night came; but the boy did not notice it. The moon, which had at first moved in the sky like a pale cloudlet scarcely noticeable, was now shining with all its nocturnal splendor. It stood right above the lake, surrounded by a multitude of brightly glittering stars. The lake appeared like a mirror in which one could see reflected a second firmament, with another moon and a countless array of stars, a world of shining lights that seemed to be limitless. The atmosphere was quiet—not a breath of air to stir the leaves of the trees. All nature was hushed, observing a reverent silence. Little Henry felt something in his heart that he had never felt before, namely the sense of devotion and homage which the vivid remembrance of God's invisible Presence inspires. At this same moment Father Menrad folded his hands; and with his eyes raised heavenward he began to pronounce the words of a prayer, telling the boy to pronounce the

words after him. Henry also, for the first time in his life, raised his hands toward heaven, repeating the words of the prayer uttered by the saintly recluse. A flood of happy tears coursed down his cheeks as he recalled to mind that God, whom up to that hour he had not known, had nevertheless bestowed so many favors on him. When Menrad had concluded his prayer, how great was his joy when he heard the boy, of his own accord, adding these words: "I thank Thee also, my dear God, for having led me out of the dark cavern, and for guiding me to the home of this good man, who has told me so many things about Thee that are grand and beautiful."

After the prayer Father Menrad took the boy by the hand and conducted him into his hut. There he prepared a bed for him, made out of the softest moss that he could find. Henry lay down on the blanket which was spread out over the moss, and the hermit covered him with his own mantle.

CHAPTER XI.

A JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAINS.

FATHER MENRAD kept the boy with him during the summer for the purpose of instructing him further, and also that he might gradually lead him to abandon the many unbecoming expressions and ill manners acquired from the evil company in which he had lived. Besides this he also expected that a wholesome diet and the bracing mountain air would greatly improve Henry's complexion; for the boy had become very pale by reason of his confinement in the cave. The joy of his parents would be so much greater, if they could see their child returned to them with the complexion of perfect health. And in fact Henry soon began to improve in appearance, his face assuming the lovely and graceful hue of a rose in the light of the morning sun.

About the middle of autumn the hermit concluded to take up his staff once more and to go in search of the boy's parents. He had formerly traversed the country far and wide and

visited many of the towns and cities; now he would visit the places again in hopes of finding some trace of the parents to whom his youthful ward belonged. Moreover he had requested the father of the young shepherd who had brought the boy to his hut to take charge of Henry until he would come and get him. This man, a prudent and very devout peasant, lived in a hut that stood some distance within the mountain district. Thither Father Menrad wanted to conduct the boy before commencing his search.

It was on a bright and lovely autumn morning that the hermit awakened the boy from his sleep. The morning-star had just arisen in the eastern sky. Menrad took the boy with him up to the chapel where he spent some time in fervent prayer to obtain God's blessing for their journey. After breakfast he provided himself with the victuals they would need while traveling, and then set out on the journey to the mountains. Henry accompanied his aged friend, his heart full of gladness. They traveled only on solitary foot-paths used by Alpine shepherds and hunters. About noon they came to a cliff that rose before them almost perpendicular, and on which, far above them, they saw

some goats clambering up the steep incline. Here they sat down in the shade to rest awhile and to partake of a slender noonday meal.

While they were eating, the goat-herd's little son came up to kiss Father Menrad's hand. Henry jumped up and cried out in amazement, "Why, here is another boy just like myself! Oh, isn't that lucky! I had no idea that there are more such small persons; I thought I was the only boy on earth. Say, you will go with us, won't you?" The boy offered to carry Father Menrad's gripsack; and then they proceeded on their way, little Henry conversing so eagerly with his boy companion that he scarcely took notice of anything else.

After some time they arrived in a small green valley surrounded by lofty cliffs, where they found a herd of sheep grazing in a meadow. This herd belonged to the man with whom Menrad intended to leave the boy. Henry was overjoyed on seeing a couple of lambs which were only a few days old. He began to stroke them fondly, calling them all kinds of endearing names.

In the meantime the hermit was looking about to find the shepherd. A short distance away, reclining under a projecting cliff from

which a small fountain of water was flowing, he noticed a shepherd girl. In one hand she had her staff, while in the other, to the hermit's astonishment, she was holding a book, in the reading of which she seemed to be entirely absorbed. Father Menrad quietly approached her. The girl was dressed in white; the hat she wore was green. Her features were unusually gentle, but one could see on her face the expression of a secret grief. She had never seen Father Menrad; but from the description she had heard she recognized him immediately, and so she arose and saluted him in a manner that betokened both friendliness and a visible sense of joyful confidence.

"I presume you have not been tending this herd very long," thus Menrad addressed the girl. "When I spoke to your master a short time ago, he did not say anything to me about you." She replied that she had already been engaged several years tending sheep in that mountain district, but only three days previously had she entered the service of her present good master. "Where are you from?" the hermit continued. "And why are you so sad?" The girl began to weep. "Alas!" said she, "I have come from a place that is far away.

An act of youthful folly has plunged me into the deepest distress. I was employed in the service of an excellent noble family. I was so thoughtless as to leave the only child of the family, a most lovely boy, alone and unguarded only for a few moments; and when I returned to the room, I found that the boy had been stolen by robbers. My sorrow and misery were such that I could not remain with my good mistress any longer, to be a witness of her distress; and so I left secretly to flee into the mountains. Here I am living in solitude, daily praying to God that He may deign to repair the injury I have caused—namely, that He may rescue the child and change the indescribable grief of the mother into joy. God, I am confident, will have pity on my tears, which no one sees me shed except Himself and these lonely cliffs.”

Father Menrad said, his voice trembling with emotion, “I think God has heard your prayer this very moment.” He drew from his pocket the little portrait of Henry’s mother which he had taken with him on the journey, expecting that it might aid him in finding her; and showing it to the girl, he asked, “Do you know this portrait?” The girl uttered a loud cry both of

terror and gladness. "O God!" she exclaimed, "this is the portrait of the Countess von Eichenfels, the mother of the stolen child."

Hearing the girl's outcry, little Henry came running up to her. He viewed this new apparition with staring eyes, and then said full of pity, "Why are you weeping, and what is ailing you? Perhaps you are hungry. Here I have some bread and two apples for you. Take them and eat."

Menrad, however, said to the girl, "Behold, this boy is the child that was robbed together with the portrait." The poor girl felt at this moment as though her heart must break from joy and fear. She sank on her knees, and raising her hands high above her toward the sky, she exclaimed, "Yes, Thou good and merciful God, Thou hast heard the prayer which day and night I have sent up to Thee. Mayest Thou graciously receive the thanks I now pronounce. Thou beholdest my gratitude, though I cannot express it in words." Then with burning tears flowing down her face, she embraced the long-lost boy. "Oh, may God bless you, my dear little Henry!" she cried. "Has God really brought you back to us? Are you really the child that was stolen, or am I only

dreaming?—Yes, you are the child; you resemble your noble father as much as one dewdrop resembles another. Oh, how glad your mother will be! Yes, and your own joy shall be very great; for, behold! we are now going to bring you back to your father and mother!”

Father Menrad wiped the tears out of his eyes and said, “Praise and honor to Thee, O merciful God! Thy fatherly Providence is visibly caring for this child. Thou dryest the tears of this unhappy maiden who has cried to Thee without ceasing. Thou restorest to the parents their most dearly beloved child. Thou hast blessed my very first steps, thereby preserving me, a man enfeebled by age, from the necessity of continuing the search for a long time. May Thy goodness and mercy be praised forever.”

Menrad, accompanied by Henry and Margaret, then proceeded on his journey to the peasant's hut, which they reached after about half an hour's walk. The little goat-herd had delivered the hermit's gripsack to Margaret, saying he would tend the sheep in her stead until he were relieved of the task.

“Are these my father and mother?” asked Henry, when he saw the peasant and his wife

waiting at the door of the hut, ready to receive their visitors; and he felt very sorry when he was told that the man and woman were not his parents. "They are so friendly," he remarked. "I am sure, my father and mother could not be friendlier than they are. I should like to have stayed right here with them." Menrad, Henry, and Margaret took some refreshment that the peasant's wife furnished them, after which they set out again on their journey. The young shepherd, by his kind father's command, accompanied them also. Toward evening they descended from the mountains into a large valley where they found lodgings for the night in the nearest town. At dawn of day the next morning they left in a farm-wagon driven by the generous young shepherd, hoping to arrive at Eichenfels in about three days.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

THE first day of the journey passed very pleasantly. Henry was extremely delighted with his ride; and the many villages, towns, and castles they drove past so hurriedly were new objects of joyful wonder to the boy. Every time he caught sight of a castle rising over the brow of a distant mountain he would ask if that were not Eichenfels.

Toward evening of the second day our travelers reached the edge of a dense forest. The roads were so bad that they could scarcely go any farther. Besides this a fearful storm had just overtaken them and the rain was pouring down in torrents. Night came and the darkness increased from minute to minute. They were obliged to take lodging in a tavern which was located in the midst of the forest. Moreover, this forest was said to be infested by robbers. However, the travelers took their evening meal, after which they soon retired to their beds in order to set out again on their

journey so much earlier the next morning. Greatly fatigued, they all fell asleep in a short time. Father Menrad alone kept awake. He had taken little Henry with him to his room; and while the boy slumbered peacefully, the hermit remained kneeling at the table on which a lighted candle stood, spending the hours till almost midnight in reading and praying.

All of a sudden Menrad heard the sounds of a great uproar coming from without. The harsh voices of several men could be clearly distinguished; and immediately after there was a violent rapping at the door and the window shutters. All the inmates of the tavern were awakened by the noise, and every one became seriously alarmed. "O God!" exclaimed Margaret, "I fear they are the robbers. They have come to take the young count from us again." The hermit who had just stepped out of his room told the girl to be silent. The tavern-keeper himself seemed badly frightened and declared that he could not venture to open the door. The men outside became more boisterous, threatening to break in the door if it were not opened.

The hermit, who was a man full of courage, said to those around him, "To keep the

door locked will do us no good. God is our protector; in His almighty hand we shall all be safe. I will go down and open the door. Perhaps, if we receive the men kindly, they will do us no harm."

Menrad opened the door; and four bearded men, very robust and heavily armed, entered the tavern. One of them carried a lighted torch. "We have to examine every room and apartment of this house," they declared sullenly. "Our commander will be here directly with a number more of our men, and he wants to have the entire house at his disposal." Menrad asked them who their commander was, and the answer he received was a surprise for him as unexpected as it was joyful:—the commander, namely, was Count Frederick von Eichenfels, little Henry's father. The count, so his retainers said, had been seriously wounded in a battle; but having recovered from his injury, he concluded not to leave the army, but to continue fighting for his country until peace were again established. The two countries had recently agreed on a treaty of peace, and hence the count was now actually on his way home, with those of his men who had not been buried on the Turkish frontier.

The inmates of the tavern were all exceedingly glad to learn that peace had been reestablished. They vied with one another in their eagerness to entertain the brave soldiers, while these latter also became very friendly and talkative. They begged to be excused for having conducted themselves so rudely. "In such weather as this," said they, "when a storm is raging and the rain is descending like a cataract, you must not take it amiss if even a soldier does not relish it to be kept standing at midnight before the door of a dwelling-house." They also explained that they had lost their way in the dark forest, and that most certainly they would not have found the tavern if the light of the burning candle had not guided them and helped them to find the right road once more.

The thought that so trifling a circumstance as the burning of a candle, while praying at a late hour of the night, should be the means of directing the count to this forest tavern, filled the pious old hermit with joy and admiration. He was accustomed to see the directing influence of divine Providence in everything that happened to him, and therefore he offered God a fervent prayer of thanksgiving for having so mercifully brought about this happy event.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATHER'S JOY.

A SHORT time after the count arrived at the inn. He was a tall man of imposing presence. His features bore the impress of nobility; his manners were gentle and winning. Soon he invited the old hermit to come with him to his room, where he asked him to be seated. He had some of his own wine brought, with which he filled two glasses, the first one for Menrad, the other for himself. Having touched his friend's glass with his own, according to the old German custom, he proceeded to drink to Father Menrad's health.

"You are most cordially welcome, reverend Father," said the count. "After such a ride, and having passed through such a storm, one feels how agreeable it is to be under a roof and in a warm room. But the sight of your venerable, honest face is even more pleasing to me—it soothes my spirit, and therefore I feel myself urged to open to you my heart. You see how merry and contented all my men are, now that we are on our way home. I, their master,—as

is often the case in this world—am the only one who feels sad and dejected. I fear that some misfortune has befallen my home during my long absence. My wife, I know, still enjoys very good health; it is about my son, my only son, that I feel such anxiety. For a long time my wife gave me no definite information in her letters concerning the child; but only in the last letter I received did she declare that probably I would not get to see the boy again in this world. Father Menrad, you are acquainted with many families of the nobility; for I know that you were once yourself a brave and well-known knight. You are just now engaged making a journey, and perhaps you have traveled far over the country. Pray tell me: Do you know anything about the condition of affairs at Eichenfels? If you cannot give me any information, I am sure you will speak to me some words of consolation."

Father Menrad replied with a face that was beaming with gladness, "I can give you the very best of information. Your son is well; and moreover, he is the loveliest boy whom I have ever seen in all my days." "Do you know him?" cried the count eagerly. "O yes, I know the boy very well," said the hermit.

“But I must tell you that during your absence your son did meet with a peculiar experience.” Menrad related to the astonished father all that he knew about little Henry’s strange fortune. To confirm the truth of what he had narrated, the hermit produced the beautiful little portrait of the countess. “Yes, it is she!” exclaimed the count. “The image is true to life. I expect, she does not now appear so fair of complexion. Alas! how much, how dreadfully the poor woman must have suffered!—But where is the boy at present?” “Here in this house,” answered Menrad. “Here in the house!” cried the count, springing up so quickly that his chair was knocked over. “Oh, why did you not tell me this right away, venerable Father? Lead me to the boy immediately, I pray you!”

Menrad took up the burning candle from the table, and the count followed him into the room to the bed of his son. There lay the boy, sleeping undisturbed—the very image of childish innocence, beautiful as an angel of heaven! The count gazed for some time on the face of his son, that face which the light that shone on it made appear so charming. “Here we behold the old saying verified which tells us that ‘God

bestows happiness on His children in their sleep," remarked the hermit. The father's eyes were filled with tears. "My God," said he, "when I left home for the war, my son was only a weeping infant, and now I see him here before me a most lovely boy. O my dear, loving wife! Now I understand your letters well. I thank you for the tender-hearted solicitude which moved you to withhold from me the knowledge of this great affliction. Henry, my darling Henry!" he then exclaimed, taking the boy by the hand and softly kissing him, "wake up—behold, your father is here!" Little Henry awoke. For awhile he kept staring at the count, not being able to rouse his senses. At last he said, full of joy and with a smile brightening his face, "Oh, is it true? God bless you, my dearest father! Did my mother come with you also?" The count lifted the boy up and clasped him in his arms while the tears of sweetest joy flowed over his face. "God's holy providence has wrought a miracle in saving you, my darling boy," he observed. "I cannot be sufficiently grateful to our heavenly Father for having restored you to me." "Nor can I be thankful enough," said Henry. "O the good God! How full of love and goodness

He is since He fills our hearts with so much joy!" The count was exceedingly delighted; and when the boy, now fully awake, showed such an amount of natural adroitness in answering and asking questions, the father's joy was great almost beyond expression. "O Menrad," he exclaimed, "what a debt of gratitude I owe you! The whole of my estate would not be sufficient to reward you for the instruction you have given him."

In the meantime Margaret also had come into the room. She stood some distance away, feeling very timid. The count saluted her kindly, extended his hand to her, and spoke some words of encouragement. "But the robbers!" he continued, full of indignation. "I will make them suffer for their evil deeds." That very night he dispatched the most fearless of his men, with orders and a special commission to hunt them up in their hiding-place, and to bring them as prisoners to Eichenfels. Then he began to converse again with his son; and no doubt, he would have remained up all night, if Father Menrad had not reminded him that they all needed rest if they wished to reach Eichenfels the next day in good spirits and at the appointed time.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AFFLICTED MOTHER CONSOLED.

AFTER the robbery of her child the good, noble hearted countess lived in her castle of Eichenfels constantly filled with grief and deep sorrow. She also received the message informing her that peace was again established, and so she expected to see her husband very soon. The thought of what a meeting this would be caused her to shed an abundance of tears. "O my God!" she cried, "how unfortunate I am! What everybody else would consider an occasion of rejoicing, fills me with inexpressible grief. Every poor soldier's wife looks forward with joy to the return of her husband—and I cannot even think of the arrival of my husband without a sense of the most profound fear and anxiety. Alas! my dear husband, what an affliction is in store for you! How shall I relate to you the terrible story of our son's disappearance? Oh, for us both there will never again be even a single hour of gladness."

The afflicted woman's fear was so great that

she could scarcely control it. Nowhere could she find peace or quiet. She went from one room to another; then she sought the house-chapel; and then again she went down into the garden. Wherever she went she prayed to God in her heart. In prayer, and in the thought that an all-wise Providence rules the destinies of men, finding a happy solution for even the most tangled human affairs—in this alone did the unhappy mother find consolation.

The countess had just retired again to the lonely bower of her garden, where she could weep and pray without being observed. “O merciful God!” she sighed, “have pity on me, have pity on my husband! Lift from me this crushing burden of grief, for Thou alone canst do it. Oh, let our reunion be a joyful one. Thy all-wise providence has ordered that father, mother, and child should be separated, to live far apart from each other; oh, that Thou wouldst restore the child to us and let us three again be united! Thou hast dried innumerable tears: do Thou also dry the tears that I am weeping. Art Thou not the God of infinite mercy whose most cherished work it is to change the sorrow of those that mourn into gladness? O Father, dearest Father of heaven!

Though I am a sinner, I am nevertheless Thy daughter, and as such I may call Thee Father; yes, Thy Son commandeth me to call Thee by that dear name. Oh, do Thou hear my prayer! Do not repel Thy child, Thy daughter, who has no other refuge but Thee!"

While thus engaged in prayer, she heard the footfall of some one approaching. Looking about her, behold! she saw Margaret, who had just arrived with her fellow travelers, coming down the long, shady arcade of the garden. The girl was nearing the bower in which the countess was praying. A bright ray of hope shone into the sorrowing mother's heart when she recognized her former governess and beheld the expression of joy on the girl's face. She felt as though it were an angel from heaven sent to console her. "O my dearest, most noble lady," thus Margaret began, "I am the bearer to you of the best and happiest news concerning your darling Henry. The boy is alive—and soon you shall see him again." Margaret had scarcely begun to explain the message she had been intrusted with, when Father Menrad also entered the arbor for the purpose of preparing the countess for the meeting that was to take place between herself and

her child and husband. The prudent old man understood well how to arrange everything. The countess was now filled with unspeakable joy, hoping as she did that within a few days' time she would see her husband and son again. She led Father Menrad to the room formerly occupied by Henry and herself.

When she opened the door, lo! her husband came toward her, bearing her son Henry on his arm. She could only exclaim, "O my husband! O my child!" before she sank weeping into the arms of the count. A long time did she weep in a speechless transport of joy, moistening with her tears the face of her son as also that of her husband. "Oh, now I would gladly die," she said at last, "since I have lived long enough to enjoy the happiness of this blessed hour. How wonderfully God has disposed everything! I could not but tremble with fear, my dearest husband, even at the thought that I would have to meet you without our Henry; and now, in the very moment of our meeting, you yourself bring our son to me on your arms!—O God, as long as I may yet live, I shall never be able to thank Thee sufficiently for having brought this dreadful affair to so happy a conclusion!—O my Henry, what a

lovely boy you have grown to be since last I saw you! My dear husband, how blessed the reunion that God has prepared for us three! He it is who allowed us to be separated from one another: He it is who now so wonderfully unites us again. To Him, our bountiful God, be adoration, praise, and thanksgiving forever!" The husband, wife, and son wept tears of joy and gratitude toward God. Margaret also could not help weeping, and the hermit felt the tears of joy flowing over his cheeks.

When the first transport of joy was over, little Henry began to tell his mother the story of the wonderful experience he had met with. His description was so vivid that the countess had to shed tears, and then again she could not help smiling. Specially interesting was that part of his narrative telling of his escape from the den, and how he felt when for the first time he beheld the sky above him. But his joy and emotion were the greatest when he spoke of the instruction in which Father Menrad conveyed to him his first idea of God. Even now, while he was telling his story, the tears were constantly flowing from his eyes.

"Indeed," said the count, "I could almost wish that I had passed the days of my own

childhood in such a cavern. We are too much accustomed to the view which we daily have of God's wonderful works. Oh, that we also, like Henry, might behold God's works only after we have come to the use of reason, and all at once for the first time—what an impression that would make on our minds! Thou God of infinite goodness, how we would be amazed on beholding Thy power; how we would admire Thy wisdom and rejoice because of Thy bounty! On thus viewing for the first time Thy glorious firmament and the beautiful earth—how deeply we would realize this truth: The happy impression we receive in our own minds must come from the mind of One whose love is without limit!”

The countess then said, “What little Henry felt when for the first time he stood under God's beautiful sky after his long sojourn in the under-ground cave, that we also shall feel when once we have entered our heavenly home after our life here on earth is ended. For is it not true? Those playthings that Henry used—the flowers, lambs, and trees, from which he derived many a pleasure while living in the cave—were they not very imperfect imitations of the same real works of God on earth? In

like manner we may be certain that all the visible beauties of this world, all the pleasures we enjoy here below, are even less than shadows of the real beauties and pleasures of heaven. The joy one experiences in being united again, after a long and painful separation, with those whom one loves so dearly—this very joy brings us as it were a foretaste of that greater joy to be experienced in heaven when we shall meet again the friends whom death parted from us. In this hour of our blissful reunion I really feel myself so happy that I might almost imagine myself as being already in heaven.”

The venerable recluse, in his turn, spoke as follows: “The sentiments expressed by you, my noble count, as also those uttered by your pious wife, are certainly very beautiful and most edifying. But the most important lesson we are to learn from little Henry’s story must still be this: The wisdom, love, and goodness of God shine forth so splendidly from the heavens and the earth that even a child can see enough traces of them to recognize the Creator in His creatures.”

CHAPTER XV.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.

A FEW days later the men whom the count had sent out to capture the robbers returned from their expedition. They had surprised the whole band, the robbers happening to be together in the cavern; and now the criminals were brought to Eichenfels, bound two and two together by heavy chains. The robbers were marched ahead, a wagon full of trunks following them. The trunks contained the many valuable articles robbed by the gang. Above these trunks sat the old gipsy woman. The robbers had not felt any concern whatever when they learned that the boy was gone. They found that the iron door was still firmly locked, and the cleft in the rock through which Henry had escaped was entirely unknown to them. The passage leading to this opening was greatly decayed, so much so that they considered it too dangerous ever to enter it. So they believed that the boy had either fallen into one of the immensely deep pits of the old

mine, or that he was buried alive by one of the passages caving in on him.

The robbers were therefore very much surprised when on being led into Eichenfels they beheld the young count standing beside his father near the gate of the castle. They could not comprehend how it was possible for him to escape through the iron door. "We imagined that nobody on earth could surpass us in cunning," growled the leader of the gang full of sullen rage, "but now we must see that even a child can outwit us and be the cause of bringing us into prison. It is enough to make one mad. Now I feel the truth of what I never wanted to believe:—When a thief is ripe for the gallows, a limping bailiff will catch him." And that one of the musicians who had played the tambourine, and who was now also among the prisoners, said to himself, "We robbed this child that it might be the means of saving us when we got into trouble; but now it is this very child that will be the cause of our ruin. People may be right after all when they say: He that does wrong will discover in the end that he has made a mistake in his reckoning." William, the young man who had always treated little Henry with kindness and consideration,

and whose disposition was not altogether evil, remarked, "It was God who ordained that the boy should escape, and I am glad to see that he is alive and well, though that very fact will be the cause of my death. In this instance God again manifests His power, namely that He can save the innocent from destruction and visit the guilty with the punishment they deserve. I see verified what my deceased father once told me, and which saying was so often repeated to me by my mother: Even though the culprit may hide himself in the middle of the earth, the avenging justice of God will find him and draw him out to let him suffer the penalty he has incurred."

When Henry noticed the poor young man bound with chains like the other robbers, he felt great pity for him; and he begged his father not to let the unfortunate youth who had shown him so much kindness suffer any punishment. The count replied that he could not then make any definite promise, but that he would treat the young man as leniently as possible. At the trial it was shown that William had never spilt human blood, and that he had acted rather as a servant of the robbers and not as a member of the gang. His life was therefore spared. In-

stead of being executed he was sentenced to imprisonment for life. Count Frederick lessened this punishment by deciding that the young man should remain in the workhouse until he had given sufficient proof of having amended his life, after which he would be allowed to return to his home. "Behold," observed the count when William was about to be led away, "as the evil that is done finds its sure punishment, so also does the good that is performed find its reward. You owe the mitigation of your punishment to the kindness with which you treated my son. Yes, I will do more. The good services you did to my son I will repay by caring for your unhappy mother. Let your conduct be such that I may be enabled soon to let you return to her."

The other robbers all had to suffer the penalty of death for the bloody deeds they had perpetrated. The old gipsy woman was imprisoned for life. The property that had been robbed by the gang was restored to such of the owners as could be found. The remainder was devoted to the erection of an orphan asylum. As a special act of thanksgiving to God the count added a considerable sum of money, while the countess sacrificed all her jewelry.

Margaret who was reemployed by the countess felt exceedingly happy. After long years of bitter grief she again experienced the joy of a peaceful and quiet conscience. George, the garden-boy, had long since been expelled from the castle on account of his levity and carelessness. Besides he had fallen a victim to intemperance and other vicious habits, in consequence of which he died of consumption in the very prime of life. The young shepherd from the mountains returned to his parents after the count had rewarded him with many rich presents.

Count Frederick wished the good old hermit to remain with him in the castle. Father Menrad did remain for some time; but he could not be persuaded to exchange his hermitage for a lasting sojourn in the castle. "I desire to devote the rest of my life entirely to God," so he declared. "I think I can do that best in the solitude. I have lived long enough in the world, and therefore I know from experience what the world is. To prepare ourselves for a better world is the best we can do while we live here on the earth." The venerable recluse, before his departure which all felt to be a very sad event, blessed the count, the

countess, and little Henry. The boy could hardly be separated from his friend and benefactor. All the members of the family accompanied the good old man to the carriage that was waiting before the gate of the castle. Father Menrad entered the carriage; and before he drove away he once more gazed lovingly on his friends, saying: "Farewell, and may the peace of God always remain with you! Let us hope that we may all one day meet again in heaven."

THE END.

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